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DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

50 CFR Part 622

[Docket No. 120404257-3325-02]

RIN 0648-XS003

**Fisheries of the Caribbean, Gulf of Mexico, and South Atlantic;
2019 Commercial Accountability Measure and Closure for South
Atlantic Golden Tilefish Hook-and-Line Component**

AGENCY: National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS), National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), Commerce.

ACTION: Temporary rule; closure.

SUMMARY: NMFS implements accountability measures for the commercial hook-and-line component for golden tilefish in the exclusive economic zone (EEZ) of the South Atlantic. NMFS projects commercial hook-and-line landings for golden tilefish will reach the hook-and-line component's commercial annual catch limit (ACL) by July 20, 2019. Therefore, NMFS closes the commercial hook-and-line component for golden tilefish in the South Atlantic EEZ on July 23, 2019, and it will remain closed until the start of the next fishing year on January 1, 2020. This closure is necessary to protect the golden tilefish

resource.

DATES: This rule is effective at 12:01 a.m., local time, July 23, 2019, until 12:01 a.m., local time, January 1, 2020.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Mary Vara, NMFS Southeast Regional Office, telephone: 727-824-5305, email: *mary.vara@noaa.gov*.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: The snapper-grouper fishery of the South Atlantic includes golden tilefish and is managed under the Fishery Management Plan for the Snapper-Grouper Fishery of the South Atlantic Region (FMP). The FMP was prepared by the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council and is implemented by NMFS under the authority of the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act (Magnuson-Stevens Act) by regulations at 50 CFR part 622.

The commercial golden tilefish sector has two components, each with its own quota (ACL): The longline and hook-and-line components (50 CFR 622.190(a)(2)). The golden tilefish commercial ACL is allocated 75 percent to the longline component and 25 percent to the hook-and-line component. On December 4, 2018, NMFS published a final rule (83 FR 62508) that implemented Regulatory Amendment 28 to the FMP, which revised the commercial and recreational ACLs for golden tilefish. The commercial ACL

was revised from 323,000 lb (146,510 kg), gutted weight, to 331,740 lb (150,475 kg), gutted weight, and the hook-and-line quota was set at 82,935 lb (37,619 kg), gutted weight, with the remainder of the commercial quota, 248,805 lb (112,856 kg), assigned to the longline component.

Under 50 CFR 622.193(a)(1)(i), NMFS is required to close the commercial hook-and-line component for golden tilefish when the hook-and-line component's commercial ACL (quota) has been reached, or is projected to be reached, by filing a notification to that effect with the Office of the Federal Register. NMFS has determined that the commercial ACL for the golden tilefish hook-and-line component in the South Atlantic will be reached by July 20, 2019. Accordingly, the hook-and-line component of South Atlantic golden tilefish is closed effective at 12:01 a.m., local time, July 23, 2019.

The commercial longline component for South Atlantic golden tilefish closed on March 14, 2019, and will remain closed for the remainder of the fishing year, until 12:01 a.m., local time, January 1, 2020 (84 FR 8997; March 13, 2019). Additionally, the recreational sector for South Atlantic golden tilefish closed on June 17, 2019, and will remain closed for the remainder of the fishing year, until 12:01 a.m., local time,

January 1, 2020 (84 FR 27479; June 16, 2019). Therefore, because the recreational sector and the commercial longline component is already closed, and NMFS is closing the commercial hook-and-line component through this temporary rule, all fishing for South Atlantic golden tilefish in the EEZ will be closed effective at 12:01 a.m., local time, July 23, 2019, until 12:01 a.m., local time, January 1, 2020.

The operator of a vessel with a valid Federal commercial vessel permit for South Atlantic snapper-grouper having golden tilefish on board must have landed and bartered, traded, or sold such golden tilefish prior to 12:01 a.m., local time, July 23, 2019. During the closure, the harvest or possession and sale or purchase of golden tilefish taken from the EEZ is prohibited. The prohibition on sale or purchase does not apply to the sale or purchase of golden tilefish that were harvested by hook-and-line, landed ashore, and sold prior to 12:01 a.m., local time, July 23, 2019, and were held in cold storage by a dealer or processor. For a person on board a vessel for which a Federal commercial or charter vessel/headboat permit for the South Atlantic snapper-grouper fishery has been issued, the prohibitions on harvest or possession and sale and purchase provisions of the commercial closure for golden tilefish would

apply regardless of whether the fish are harvested in state or Federal waters, as specified in 50 CFR 622.190(c)(1)(ii).

Classification

The Regional Administrator, Southeast Region, NMFS, has determined this temporary rule is necessary for the conservation and management of South Atlantic golden tilefish and is consistent with the Magnuson-Stevens Act and other applicable laws.

This action is taken under 50 CFR 622.193(a)(1) and is exempt from review under Executive Order 12866.

These measures are exempt from the procedures of the Regulatory Flexibility Act because the temporary rule is issued without opportunity for prior notice and comment.

This action responds to the best scientific information available. The Assistant Administrator for Fisheries, NOAA (AA), finds that the need to immediately implement this action to close the commercial hook-and-line component for golden tilefish constitutes good cause to waive the requirements to provide prior notice and opportunity for public comment pursuant to the authority set forth in 5 U.S.C. 553(b)(B), as such procedures are unnecessary and contrary to the public interest. Such procedures are unnecessary because the rule

itself has been subject to notice and comment, and all that remains is to notify the public of the closure. Such procedures are contrary to the public interest because the capacity of the fishing fleet allows for rapid harvest of the commercial ACL for the hook-and-line component, and there is a need to immediately implement this action to protect golden tilefish. Prior notice and opportunity for public comment would require time and could potentially result in a harvest well in excess of the established commercial ACL.

For the aforementioned reasons, the AA also finds good cause to waive the 30-day delay in the effectiveness of this action under 5 U.S.C. 553(d) (3).

Authority: 16 U.S.C. 1801 *et seq.*

Dated: July 18, 2019.

Alan D. Risenhoover,
Director, Office of Sustainable Fisheries,
National Marine Fisheries Service.

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